

*SBT-AE-001. Solitude. Alexander Pope Poem.*

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## **Solitude. Alexander Pope Poem. Appreciation By P S Remesh Chandran**

*Editor, Sahyadri Books & Bloom Books, Trivandrum*



By [PSRemeshChandra](#), 7th Mar 2011. Short URL

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Alexander Pope was born a Catholic in Protestant England, was forbidden to live in London City and was liable to pay a double taxation. Moreover, he was suffering from a series of diseases. 'To combat these handicaps', he possessed more than the courage of a lion. His poems were acrimonious attacks on society, and in a few cases they were against authority. He mentioned names in his poems, leaving dashes in places, which his contemporaries happily filled in to the embarrassment of adversaries.

**Satisfaction, self-sufficiency and piety are the characteristics of a happy life.**



*01. Portrait of Alexander Pope.*

'Ode On Solitude' which was alternately titled 'The Quiet Life' was written by Alexander Pope to celebrate the virtues of a happy and satisfied life. In this poem, he discusses the characteristics of a happy life which are satisfaction, self-sufficiency and piety. Man was the fittest subject for his poetry. In an imaginative treatment, he illuminates the knowledge about man, in relation to individuals, society and the Universe. He once said: The proper study of mankind is man. To him belongs the greatest number of quotations in the English language. Essay On Man, Essay On

Criticism, The Rape Of The Lock, and The Temple Of Fame are the most famous of his works. They are very long poems, but Ode On Solitude is a short poem. Even though it is very short, it conveys to mankind the full philosophy of how to live contented. We cannot search for a happy man in this world because he is a very rare specimen to find, but can certainly identify one by tracing the characteristics of a happy life back to him.

**Be happy to breathe one's native air in his own ground.**



*02. Happy to breathe his native air in his own ground.*

Everyone knows that he who goes after increasing the area of land in his possession by encroaching into his neighbor's property will land in trouble, and lose the quietness and happiness of his life. The happy man is satisfied with what he is having at present. He is not interested in increasing his landed properties. His wish and care are bound within the few acres of land given to him by his ancestors. These few paternal acres are enough for him. In the old England, whoever wanted more prosperity than what his natives had, went to France and made money. At one time, it was even joked that whoever vanished from Dover in search of a job would certainly make his appearance soon in Calais, the counterpart town on the French coast across the Channel. But the happy man wishes not to go abroad to France or anywhere else to make money or to enjoy life as others of his times did. He

is content to breathe his native air in his own ground. Thus satisfaction is characteristic of a quiet, happy life.

**He who watches the passing of time without anxiety is happy.**



*03. A day's labour blesses us with a night's sleep.*

Dependence leads to bondage and bondage deprives man of his freedom. With the loss of freedom, the quietness and happiness in man's life is lost. Therefore the happy man would be self-sufficient also. He would not depend on others for food, clothes or drinks. His herds would be supplying him with milk and his flocks of black sheep would be supplying him with wool for making his attire. He would be winning his bread by cultivating his own fields. And he would have planted enough number of trees in his homestead which would yield him cool shade in summer and enough firewood to burn in winter. Thus self-sufficiency is another characteristic of a happy life.

**Time passes as if a sledge is sliding over the snow.**





*04. Herds and woods for milk and fire.*

If somebody can watch without anxiety the passing of time, then he is a blessed person indeed. Hours, days and years slide soft away as if a sledge is sliding over the snow. Time progresses in a straight line and no point in it will ever be repeated. The feelings and passions attached to a particular moment in life can never be enjoyed anymore. Right actions at the tiny moments constitute what is happiness in life. All our actions of yester years become our past and what we plan and intend to do in coming years become our future. There is no history without actions. Thus righteousness also is a determinant of the happiness of a person's life and history. Piety or unchanging belief also is a faculty desirable, which the happy man would be in possession of in plenty. He regrets not a moment in his life, and therefore, has no anxiety in the passing of time. Therefore he can unconcernedly observe the passing of time, in health of body and peace of mind. His is the perfect attitude towards Time.

**Withdraw stealthily from the world: Let not even a stone tell where one lies.**

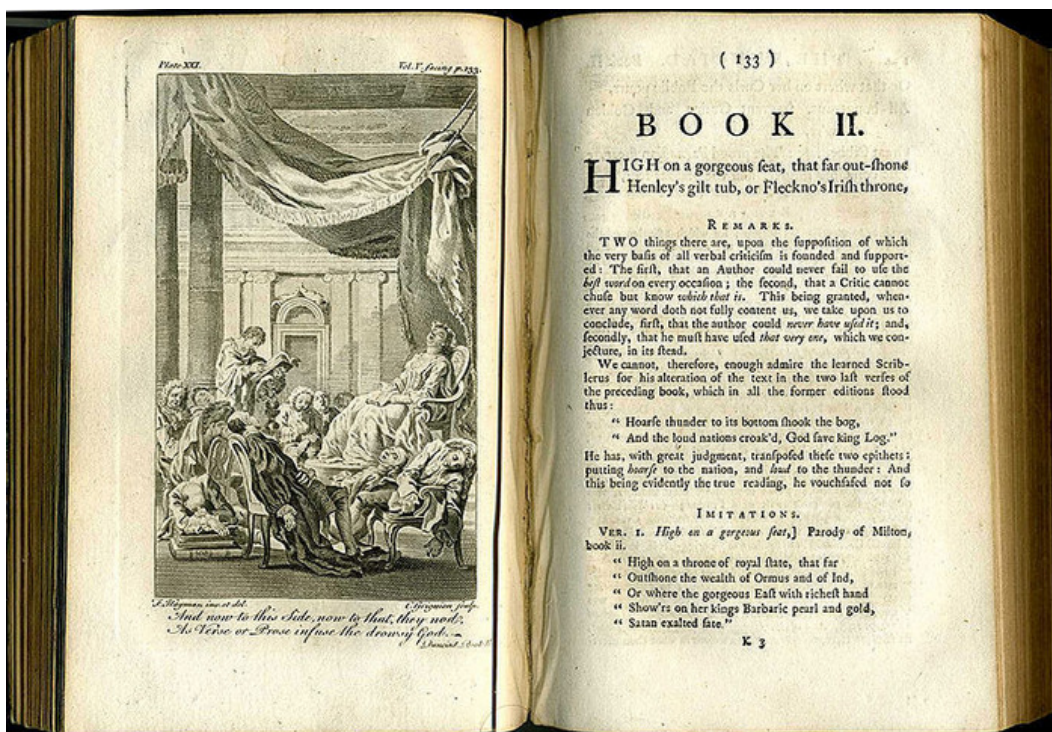


*05. Who can unconcernedly watch time passing away.*

The nights of the happy man would be spent on sleeping sound. His daytime activities do not leave room for horror-filled dreams during nights. His day time would be devoted to a recreation-like studying, which is everyone's dream. It must be remembered here that not all are blessed with a successful books-publishing career and heavy royalties from published books as the poet. But a thirty percent book reading, ten percent life experience and the rest sixty percent travel would make any man perfect. Study and ease, together mixed, is a sweet recreation, which is the poet's formula for life. The happy man's innocence, his perfection and his meditative traits make him pleasing to the world.

**Books are real monuments for a poet, taking him to eternity.**





## 06. Books are real monuments for a poet.

Like a truly happy man, the poet wishes to live unseen and unknown like a nonentity, and die unlamented. He wishes to withdraw stealthily from this world and pleads that not a stone be placed over his grave to tell the world where he lies. He wishes perfect, undisturbed Solitude. Conversely, this poem is the real epitaph for this poet. It teaches the world lessons.

## Brilliant success and sweet revenge of a poet.



*07. Alexander Pope's villa in Twickenham on the Thames.*

For people who idealize perfect life, especially for poets, it would be impossible to achieve success in normal circumstances. So it would be interesting to note how this poet, hunted by his society, took his sweet revenge on those who excluded him and his people from London's social and literary circles. Pope considered thousands of lines in Shakespeare's works not original, and contaminated by stage actors' speeches to please and thrill audience. So, he completely edited and recast them in clean poetic form and published a Regularized New Edition of Shakespeare in 1725. He translated *Odyssey* as well. These, and his major works in later years, gained him universal fame, were translated into many languages including German, and caused him to be considered as a philosopher. But the epic feat of this unmarried poet was done in the very early years of his literary career. Like Keats, Pope was an admirer of Greek Poetry from his boyhood. His dream was, translating the *Iliad* into English, which he did in six books during the six years from 1715. Even the severe Samuel Johnson called it 'a performance beyond age and nation'. Coming from Johnson, it was indeed praise. Publication of this monumental work brought him instant fame in England and abroad and also a fortune for his wallet. With this immense wealth, the poet bought him a home in Twickenham on the Thames which he decorated with precious stones and intricate mirror arrangements. He made the subterranean rooms resound with the pleasant noise of an

underground stream. Because mermaids could not be purchased, he did not equip one.

**Bloom Books Channel has a video of this poem.**



08. *Solitude Of Quiet Life* Video Title. <http://youtu.be/L66GcSKH6j8>

A primitive prototype rendering of this song was made in a crude tape recorder decades earlier, in 1984. In 2014, a home made video of this song was released. In 2015, a third version with comparatively better audio was released. The next version, it's hoped, would be fully orchestrated. It's free for reuse, and anyone interested can develop and build on it, till it becomes a fine musical video production, to help our little learners, and their teachers.

You Tube Link: <http://youtu.be/L66GcSKH6j8>

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Editor of Sahyadri Books & Bloom Books, Trivandrum. Author of several books in English and in Malayalam. And also author of 'Swan, The Intelligent Picture Book'. Edits and owns Bloom Books Channel. Born and brought up in Nanniyode, a little village in the Sahya Mountain Valley in Kerala. Father British Council-trained English Teacher and mother university-educated. Matriculation with High First Class, Pre Degree studies in Science with National Merit Scholarship, discontinued Diploma Studies in Electronics and entered politics. Unmarried and single.

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